

HOLZMAN: Councilor cites daughter's health concerns

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wreck that left her with fractured vertebra and other injuries. Now stabilized, she is coming to Sisters to recuperate.

"Such catastrophic events immediately change your life and priorities. Mine has to be to help her in whatever way I can to achieve a complete recovery," Councilor Holzman said. (See full text of Holzman's resignation statement accompanying the online version of this story at www.nuggetnews.com.)

Holzman is the third city councilor to step down in the past four months. Sisters City Councilor Bill Hall resigned his position in June, after less than a month on the job, citing undue levels of stress imposed by a contentious civic climate in town. McKibben Womack also cited the stresses of the political climate and the effect on family life in his own resignation last April.

While the need to focus on her daughter's recovery was paramount, Holzman, too, noted the civic climate.

"Under normal circumstances, I believe I could both continue on council and focus on my daughter and family as she returns to Sisters to continue her healing," Holzman stated. "But with the current 'contentious

and toxic' political climate (as I've heard it described many times), I do not believe this is possible. In my almost nine years of involvement with our community, I have not ever witnessed this degree of lack of civility and disrespect, including public ridicule and personal attacks as in the past year or two. As a volunteer in my current situation, I find the stress beyond reasonable expectation. Therefore, I am resigning from City Council."

Holzman, who was elected to a second term last November, cites advocacy for Fir Street Park as her proudest accomplishment as a councilor.

"The thing I'm definitely proudest of is being an advocate from the very beginning for Fir Street Park and seeing that project completed," she said.

That project, combined with the Cascade Avenue improvements, has left downtown looking "fabulous," she noted. She said that City staff played an important role in the positive outcome of the Cascade Avenue project, citing City Manager Andrew Gorayeb and Public Works Director Paul Bertagna's efforts to communicate with business owners and to solve problems quickly and efficiently.

"Andrew and Paul made that whole process go a lot more smoothly," Holzman said.

She acknowledged that the City fell down on public

outreach concerning some significant proposed projects, including an amphitheater proposal that was shot down by the public and plans for renovation of Creekside Park.

"I think we should have gotten out in front of the public a lot earlier with the amphitheater," she said. "I think we could have done more listening (in the beginning) with the overnight park as well."

However, she notes, those negatives have produced some positive outcomes. The amphitheater controversy led to the formation of a Community Assets Committee to vet potential projects and the Creekside renovation has involved considerably more dialogue with neighbors and interested citizens as it has evolved.

As the City moves forward without her at the table, Holzman says that she is pleased with its direction and function. She noted that staff has been working on detailed analysis of needs and options regarding low-cost housing.

"I'm very pleased that we are really taking housing more seriously," she said.

Holzman plans to continue to work on "bike-ped" issues, which are near and dear to her heart, and she expects that she will eventually step back into some kind of public role.

"I'm not sure that means an elected position," she said. "It just means community involvement somewhere."

More training urged for planning commission

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

There is one contention on which there was agreement by all parties during a highly contentious City Council hearing on McKenzie Meadows Village senior living facility: The Sisters Planning Commission made a procedural error in not continuing the original June 18 public hearing as requested by the appellant's attorney.

In discussion of this point, during last Thursday's appeal hearing (see story, page 1) there was concern on the part of the council about the message being sent if they ignored the mistake.

Councilor Nancy Connolly said, "It was an unfortunate learning opportunity for the planning

commission." Recent turnover on the planning commission, and a fairly new chairman, as well as the absence of legal representation for the City at that hearing, could have all contributed to what the council believes was an honest mistake.

Councilor David Asson opined, "It was not a mistake that jeopardizes this project."

Council did encourage staff to provide more education and guidance to the planning commission, to hopefully reduce the chances for future mistakes.

The general consensus was that the council's *de novo* (from scratch) hearing was a "brand-new hearing with a brand-new decision" that supersedes what occurred before.



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